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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 000451

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA, NEA/ELA AND DRL/NESCA  
NSC FOR SHAPIRO, PASCUAL AND KUCHTA-HELBLING

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAL](#) [ASEC](#) [SU](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: INTERIOR MINISTER ON KHAN BOMBING, GAZA SMUGGLING  
AND HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: A. CAIRO 255

[B.](#) CAIRO 243

[C.](#) CAIRO 79

Classified By: Ambassador Margaret Scobey for reason 1.4 (b).

[11.](#) (S) KEY POINTS

-- (S) On March 12, Interior Minister Habib Al-Adly told the Ambassador that evidence indicates "one or two" individuals were responsible for the February 22 Khan Al-Khalili market bombing. He said the MOI believes the individuals were not linked to any organized group, but received foreign financing from "different Islamic groups" in the Palestinian territories.

-- (S) On arms trafficking into Gaza, the Minister said that GOE forces killed a number of arms smugglers in the Egypt-Sudan border region "three weeks ago" and seized their weapons. He blamed youth in the Sinai for smuggling weapons and drugs into Gaza. The Ambassador offered U.S. assistance for developing economic alternatives in the Sinai to replace smuggling.

-- (C) The Ambassador raised concern over recent arrests of activists and bloggers, including Dia Gad who remains in jail (ref A). The Minister responded that the MOI does not usually intervene in freedom of expression issues, but needs to take action when "people are offended by blogs."

-- (C) The Ambassador raised the police torture case of Mona Thabet and an alleged police sodomy video posted on the web February 8 (ref B). An MOI official claimed that Thabet's husband, not police, had tortured her, and that the media had reported the case inaccurately. The Minister asserted that police torture cases are "isolated," but that all are investigated.

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Khan Bombing  
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[12.](#) (S) The Minister said the GOE is still examining all the evidence surrounding the February 22 bombing in the Khan Al-Khalili Market, but that initial indications point to one to two individuals not linked to any organized group. He noted that evidence from the crime scene shows that the perpetrators were not professional and prepared the "primitive" improvised explosive device in haste to cause a small explosion. He explained that the MOI's information indicates that the perpetrators received foreign financing from "different Islamic groups" in the Palestinian territories. The Minister said that the MOI had prevented similar attempted bombings in the past. He praised the cooperation and information exchanges between the MOI and the Embassy.

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Smuggling into Gaza  
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¶3. (S) The Minister described combating arms smuggling into Egypt over the long Sudanese border as "difficult," despite the Egyptian military's "control over the border." He noted that "three weeks ago" Egyptian forces killed arms smugglers in the border region and seized their weapons. He praised GOE-Sudanese Government information exchanges, and expressed "optimism" about their joint efforts. The Minister asserted that smugglers deliver weapons to Gaza by sea, but not through Egyptian territorial waters.

¶4. (C) He explained that the primary problem in the Sinai is with the youth who operate outside tribal norms and customs to profit from weapons and narcotics smuggling, and human trafficking. He said the GOE is serious about working with the youth and developing agricultural projects in the Sinai. The Ambassador offered U.S. assistance for developing economic alternatives in the Sinai to replace smuggling.

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Bloggers  
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¶5. (C) The Ambassador expressed concern over the recent arrests of bloggers, including Dia Gad who remains in jail. (Note: Per ref A, State Security arrested the pro-Palestinian blogger Dia Gad February 6 following his on-line descriptions of Mubarak as "a Zionist, an agent for

CAIRO 00000451 002 OF 002

Israel and a loser." End note.) She also called attention to the short-term detentions of political activists. The Minister responded that the MOI does not usually intervene in freedom of expression issues, but needs to take action when "people are offended by blogs." He termed the examples raised as "only individual cases," and asserted that the GOE does not block the internet and is committed to press freedom. The Minister said he was not familiar with Dia Gad's case, and committed to looking into it. An aide to the Minister accused the "New York Times" of "exaggerating the blogger issue."

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Police Brutality  
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¶6. (C) The Ambassador raised the police torture case of Mona Thabet, and the video posted on the web February 8 allegedly depicting the police sodomy of Ahmed Abdel Fattah Ali (ref B). (Note: Human rights lawyers directly involved in her case have told us they believe police in the Shubra neighborhood of Cairo beat and tortured Thabet after she filed a complaint regarding the alleged police torture of her husband. End note.) An aide to the Minister responded that Thabet's husband is a criminal who tortured her and then blamed the police for his own actions. He charged that the independent newspaper "Al-Badeel" had inaccurately reported that the police tortured Thabet. The Minister accused the local press of routine false reporting, and said that the MOI does not comment on inaccurate stories.

¶7. (C) The Minister rejected a March 10 Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) report asserting that MOI officers tortured 56 individuals and killed 13 between June 2008 and February 2009. He claimed that the MOI investigated the report and found that there were 30-40 deaths in police stations, all of which resulted from various natural causes, not police brutality. The Minister asserted that young police officers torture detainees in "isolated" incidents, and that torture is "not acceptable in Egypt."

¶8. (C) The Minister said that officers are prosecuted if

there is evidence against them. An aide to the Minister noted that on March 11 a court acquitted three officers of homicide charges in a brutality case, and he lamented that human rights organizations did not cover this news.

(Comment: The EOHR is a reputable human rights organization. Per ref C, we believe that police brutality is endemic, not isolated, and that while there have been increasing prosecutions of officers in recent years, the MOI has not taken comprehensive steps to address the problem. End comment.)

SCOBAY